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LETTER DATED 5 AUGUST 1992 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT AT GENEVA ADDRESSED TO THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Note by the Chairman

The Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights draws the attention of the Commission to a letter he has received dated 5 August 1992 addressed to him by the President of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

GE.92-13108/4949H (E)

We beg you to form a group of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and to send it urgently to Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to investigate the situation concerning the concentration camps in which more than 100,000 non-Serbian members of the civilian population are currently incarcerated.

We suggest that the situation in the Prijedor area be investigated first, for, as far as we know, there are 13 camps and prisons holding 33,500 detainees. The worst of these by [illegible] the Omarska camp near Prijedor, where soldiers of the Banjaluka Corps of the Yugoslav Army, with the aid of members of the Serbian Democratic Party and of volunteers from Serbia and Montenegro, are practising various forms of torture on several thousand prisoners. It would be very useful if a group of the United Nations Commission could visit the Omarska camp immediately and submit its report to the Commission for the emergency meeting proposed for the next week.

According to the testimony of a survivor, 18-year-old Elvira Joksić, who succeeded in escaping together with her 8-month-old child, her husband was beaten to death in that camp. The four "S" letters, the symbol of the Serbian extremists, were carved on his chest - as was done to many other prisoners. Drunken terrorists fired point-blank into the breast of Sabiha Garibović before the eyes of her two young children. According to the testimonies of other witnesses, many prisoners have been killed by having their heads beaten against walls. The majority of the inmates of Omarska are civilians aged from 16 to 65. Amongst them are many intellectuals from Prijedor, including 12 priests. Some reports say that 13 lorryloads of bodies have been taken from this camp and buried in a common grave.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has not been allowed to visit this camp.

A visit by members of your Commission, Mr. Chairman, would be the best way of establishing the true facts about the concentration camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I very much fear that we are dealing with the cruellest and most massive abuse of human rights since the Second World War.

For this reason we await the arrival of your group as soon as possible.

(Signed) Alija Izetbegović
President of the
Republic of Bosnia
and Herzegovina